

Riparian Forest Buffers as Wildlife Habitat

(391, 645)

Purpose: A riparian forest buffer is an area of trees and shrubs located adjacent to streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands that decrease the amount of surface runoff and pollutants in shallow subsurface water flow and provide food and cover for wildlife. These buffers decrease the amount of water flow and pollutants into larger bodies of water and improve water quality.

Requirements:

- **Zone 1** is the area that begins at the normal water line or at the edge of the active channel or shore and extends a **minimum of 15 feet**
- Dominant vegetation, whether planted or naturally seeded, should consist of at least two species of *native woody plants* that are well-suited to the habitat site and intended purpose
- Spacing should be adequate for the greatest amount of growth in the species used
- **Zone 2** is an additional strip of land that begins adjacent to Zone 1 and extend a **minimum** distance of **20 feet**
- The **combined** width of Zones 1 and 2 is **35 to 100 feet**, or 30 percent of the flood plain, whichever is less
 - **Note:** A third zone (Zone 3) of *native herbaceous vegetation* may be used adjacent to cropland along with the two zones of woody vegetation to further decrease erosion and runoff and provide additional wildlife habitat
- Protect riparian forest buffer from grazing

Maintenance:

- Periodic inspection and protection from livestock damage and destructive fire
- Periodic removal of trees where they represent a hazard to streambank stability
- Vegetation shall remain undisturbed except for periodic harvesting of trees to maintain the functioning of the buffer
 - **Note:** All forest harvesting operations should be in compliance with South Carolina's Best Management Practices for Forestry



Riparian Forest Buffers

Suggested Plantings:

- Zone 1 and 2 – water oak, willow oak, and laurel oak at a rate of **100 to 200 trees per acre**
- Zone 3 – on lands adjacent to cropland, native herbaceous plants

Primary Habitat Consideration:

- Natural food and cover for wildlife
- Create travel corridors for all wildlife
- Improve water quality

Site Specific Comments and Recommendations:

USDA-NRCS South Carolina

July 1998

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.